DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 284 95 JC 770 134

AUTHOR Hernandez, Alicia
TITLE Enriching Self Concept Through Bicultural Approaches; Group Counseling for Chicanas. Project Mexico.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Los Angeles. Latin American Center.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [Feb 77]
NOTE 9p.; For related documents, see JC 770 127-140

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Biculturalism; Community Colleges; Counseling Programs; Culture Conflict; *Females; *Group Counseling; Individual Power; *Junior Colleges; Junior College Students; *Mexican Americans; *Self Concept; Sex Role
IDENTIFIERS *Chicanas

ABSTRACT

This document outlines an integrated plan for establishing a community college counseling group exclusively for Chicanas, which focuses on strengthening self-concept in order to succeed in college. Among the objectives of the counseling program are increasing the personal power base of the counselee, enhancement of the Chicana's ethnic group identity, reinforcement of the use of Spanish to reflect a better self-concept, development of an emotionally supportive environment, and acquisition of adaptive skills for overcoming alienation, sharing of information, and to affect risk-taking. Among the counseling group activities that can be utilized in meeting the counseling objectives are discussion of personal topics, development of college survival skills, and analysis of cultural advantages and handicaps. A short bibliography is appended. (JDS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED134294

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ENRICHING SELF CONCEPT THROUGH BICULTURAL APPROACHES

Group Counseling for Chicanas
Project México
June 26 - August 8
1976

Alicia Hernández
Río Hondo College
3600 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, California 90608

Sponsored by the Ucla Latin American Center on a grant from the U.S. Office of Education

Fulbright-Hayes Training Grants--Group Projects Abroad (13.440)

JC 770 134

In a decade characterized by changing values and expectations, women have turned to educational institutions as a means of eliminating the sexual caste system to which they have been relegated.

Increasingly, many have turned to the Community Colleges as a first step to initiating or continuing their education. In California where a system of 110 colleges exists, the Open Door Policy states that anyone desiring higher education is entitled to receive it. Colleges have responded with special outreach programs designed for women: Women's Centers, classes in Women's Studies, child care and financial aid. It would seem that educational barriers to female achievement have been removed.

For California, where 17 out of every 100 residents are Chicano, only nine percent constitute the total enrollment in California Community Colleges based on a 1974 census. Approximately four percent of the nine percent are Chicanas. Despite the artificial and psychological barriers that still exist, Chicanas continue to pursue higher education as a means to self-actualization.

Given the population figures, Chicanas are underrepresented in enrollment. Since no criteria for admission exist , what is happening to women who enter and never finish?

Chicanas are entering colleges but are not exiting with degrees. Unrestricted admissions does not a college make. The Open Door Policy and the number of supportive services created for women are not focusing on the unique needs of Chicanas. An underdeveloped aspect of support lies within the counseling services.

What follows them, is an integrated plan for establishing a counseling group exclusively for Chicanas. The approach will be multifocused in strengthening the self-concept through bicultural approaches. Critical to the success of the group is to legitimize the Chicanas in her environment through self-awareness and consequently initiate behavioral changes.

It is recommended that the group be limited to ten participants, that they meet on a weekly basis for one hour; for a nine-week period. As the group develops into a larger support system, they will hopefully continue to meet with or without the facilitator on an ongoing basis.

Due to the short duration of time, it is essential that the group focus on one topic, that of strengthening the self-concept in order to succeed in college. The experience of this writer validates that this area once strengthened promotes better coping strategies for subsequent conflicts.

Closely related to self-esteem is educational preparation and experience. Chicanas on the most part average 8.1 years of formal schooling. While in school, they read at a lower level and drop out at a higher level than their Anglo counterparts, and subsequently have little or no skills in entering the world of work. While this does not measure their potential nor competencies, it does interfere with their willingness to enter academic competition.

Group counseling has its advantages in isolating these women in an effort for unlearning previously held views. Several premises can be assumed:

1. Traditionally the educational systems in the United States have been nonsupportive of Chicanas.

2. Chicanas have had to struggle with a multitude of barriers in pursuing an education.

3. The Women's Movement has given impetus to women, including Chicanas to self-actualize, but has not validated the cultural and historical contributions of Chicanas, nor has it taken into account the distinct dynamics of Chicanas.

4. Cultural conflict is a basic phenomenon for Chicanas in contemporary North American society.

5. Isolation and often withdrawal are common responses of Chicanas to highly formal organizations and depersonalized roles which produce culture conflict and alienation.

Traditionally, group counseling has not addressed itself to the culturally distinct female. In fact, it is most typified by its Anglo defined, dominant culture role.

Past experience with traditional psychological programs have found them to be inappropriate and inadequate for Chicanas. They maintain that Chicano culture is negative, that it interferes with intellectual and emotional development, and often counseling theory becomes a blueprint for acculturation.

These programs suffer from a limited range of ideas and reflect the social system of mainstream middle class values. Psychological salvation comes from accepting psychological world view.

It is important then, that in organizing the group, that stress be given to validating the duality of experience which the Chicana brings to the college community. The Chicana does not exist in isolation, she interacts on a daily basis with her environment, culture and society in which she finds herself. To fail to integrate these subsystems in a counseling model is to negate a significant portion of her uniqueness.

Project México afforded the writer the opportunity of firsthand observations with Mexican women of various classes and vocations. Parallels can be drawn with contemporary Chicanas and the women of México.

1. Limited role models. Most women in either country do the same type of work inside as well as outside the home. México is male dominated in the professions. Limited role models are also reflected in the literature, fully actualized characters are scarce.

2. The tradition of the Malinche, the interpreter and ultimately the mistress of Cortes. Her role in the conquest of México has been subjected to negative and false history. It has, however, promoted the role dichotomy of virgin/servant.

3. Machismo (male superiority) is alive and well on both sides of the border and continues to flourish. Society rewards male privilege, he being the economic first.

4. Although Agrarian Reform is written into the Mexican Constitution; it only provided equal distribution of land to men and their wives, thus placing the women in an economically dependent role. In the United States, it is this dependency that prevents most women from a search for self.

5. Modern Mexican Art is not independent of Mexican politics; subject matter was often used for political propaganda. Diego Rivera, the great muralist, is credited with discovering México for the Mexicans through his use of indigenous themes. Many murals depict women in passive roles, both in México and in the murals found in East Los Angeles. In the United States, it is not uncommon to find male superiority and ego dependent on female passivity and submissiveness.

6. The need to compromise female independence and sense of self worth for family cohesiveness and societal expectations. From personal conversations, although many women felt that there might be a way for these roles to be complementary, they did not envision any drastic changes forthcoming.

Group success will depend on a large part on the group facilitator. She should be thoroughly familiar with aspects of both cultures. She should be bilingual and have some training in group counseling which will help in pacing the group and setting objectives.

Possible objectives include:

1. To increase the personal power base of the individual to function successfully in highly formal and depersonalized social processes.

2. To enhance the Chicana's ethnic group identity and forge stronger bonds toward the realization of her stated goal.

3. To reinforce her use of Spanish to reflect a better self-concept.

4. To acquire new adaptive skills that will affect risk taking, sharing of information, and ways to analyze and manipulate it, as well as strategies for overcoming alienation.

5. Develop an emotional supportive environment, one that creates a highly integrative experience between the individual and the group.

The alleviation on intrapersonal conflicts often depends on the student's responses being met by understanding and acceptance. This cannot be accomplished if the group facilitator has had little awareness of the intraconflicts of Chicanas.

Structuring the nine-week course will depend most likely on group needs and group participation in setting mutual goals. Suggestions for group activities follow:

A. Personal topics:

1. Family financial and emotional support and family expectations within a multicultural setting. This could be developed by having each student disclose what their definition of success includes and how their fathers would define success. Differentiate between traditional versus nontraditional roles for Chicanas.

2. Self validation through name usage. This technique was developed by Aureliano Ruiz in the California Personnel and Guidance Journal (1975), and is entitled Reclaim Your Nombre.

> "Reclaim Your Nombre" (name) was developed in order to increase acceptance of self-identity and ethnicity. This interaction technique is especially meaningful for those group members whose real names have been changed by others, Vicente, Marcos, Marta, Francisco, and Enrique, for example, became Bert, Skip, Martie, Franky, and Hank, respectively. It is also helpful for those who have their names mispronounced.
>
> In this procedure group members are offered the opportunity to state their real names and pronounce them correctly. They can also express and deal with feelings related to their names.

3. Encourage Spanish language usage in group interaction. Spanish is not generally accepted as a prestige language. It is not considered elegant in restaurants to order in Spanish, for example, as it is for French. Since many Chicanas are classified as English preference, that is, they feel more comfortable speaking English but understand Spanish, this will provide an excellent opportunity to validate their bilingualism and strengthen their skills.

4. Discussion on skin color. Color preferences have been built into us by television and advertising. A discussion on their feelings about their individual skin color will

elicit not only positive but also negative responses. This is another technique developed by A. Ruiz in the same article.

5. The quest for self-actualization. Many times such a quest is looked upon by males as a negation of cultural values and is looked upon as an "Anglo trip." Discussion should be centered on the need to develop a self-identity.

6. Folk medicine. Many families still look to curranderos as a form of mental or health care. The group should not challenge this belief, nor should they sanction it. They should give the freedom to choose this type of treatment if so desired.

B. College Survival Skills:

1. Unrealistic expectations. College is not a panacea for all social ills. It is a system for acquiring skills to cope with the ills.

2. The need to plan an academic program with remediation if necessary. Realistic time lines should be established.

3. Note taking. Knowledge does not come from osmosis. Chicanas must be taught that note taking is a skill; they should practice becoming adept at brain-picking, identification of primary and subordinate ideas.

4. Institutional bureaucracy. Develop "gamesmanship" and learn to work through channels. Coping with institutional racism and sexism in the classroom.

5. Choosing a major and a career. Differentiating between a job and a career. How careers determine life-styles, avoiding occupational obsolescense and new fields open to Chicanas.

C. Cultural Advantages and Handicaps:

1. Although blatantly ignored, México has produced outstanding female historical figures. For example, the soldaderas of the Revolutionary War and nontraditional artists such as Frida Kahlo.

2. Sexual and role stereotypes. Young women tend to look at limitations in this context and can evaluate the implications for accepting these roles.

3. Mobility and lack of mobility. Family support though strong can often hinder mobility in the job market. The same survival skills that she acquires in enrolling in college

can be used for adapting to new work environments. Stress should be placed on the difference between achievement and the need for affiliation.

4. Reevaluation of dreams and aspirations acquired during the formative years. Many times they were Anglo or white-defined, a forward step would be towards self-defining them.

Chicanas come to the Community Colleges in a spirit of trust with a duality of experience. While they view themselves as less than adequately prepared, and unfortunately many times exit in the same way, they can be helped in enriching their self-concept. The richness of their experience, the strengths of their biculturalism, el oro del barrio, has not been validated in traditional counseling frameworks.

While the course is designed for a short duration, it can provide the nucleus for ongoing supportive systems that integrate cultural contexts. Once the self-concept is strengthened, many challenges can be met and behaviours can be modified. Chicanas can then formulate an internal criteria of excellence, one that is not judged by white standards.

It is hoped that by the end of the course, the Chicana can be able to evaluate the bicultural experience available to her and select values and aspects, whether cultural or economic, to reject, change, accept and perpetuate by means of a realistic and accurate self-identity and through an insightful assessment of reality.

References

Books

Bardwick, Judith, Psychology of Women
A Study of Bio-Cultural Conflicts
Harper Row, New York, 1971.

Casasola, Gustavo, Historía Grafica de la Revolucíon Mexicana, 1900-1970.
Editorial Trillas, Mexico, D.F. Tomos I-IV, 1973.

DuBrin, Andrew J., Women in Transition
Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1972.

Hahner, June E., Editor, Women in Latin American History - Their Lives and Views
UCIA Latin American Center Publications,
UCIA, 1976.

Pescatello, Ann, Editor, Female & Male in Latin America - Essays, University of
Pittsburgh Press, 1973.

Periodicals and Other Media

Duran, Dr. Rubin, Editor, Salubridad Chicana: Su Preservacion Y Mantenimieto: The Chicano Plan for Mental Health
Published by the National Coalition of Spanish Speaking Mental Health Organizations,
Washington, D.C., 1975.

Flores, Yvette, Career and Academic Guidance for Chicana Girls,
unpublished Master thesis, California State University,
Long Beach, 1975.

Miranda, Ph.d., Manuel, Editor, Psychotherapy with Spanish Speaking Families
Spanish Speaking Mental Research Center, UCLA, 1976.

Ramirez, Ph.d., Manuel, III, Tape from The First Annual Conference of Third World Counsellors and Psychologists
University of California at Irvine, March, 1976.

Ruíz, Aureliano S. Chicano Group Catalysts, Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 53, February, 1975.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

MAR 25 1977

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES